



AUTISM AT ACU

What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental condition – not an illness – that affects how a person thinks, feels, interacts with others and experiences their environment.

Autism challenges

The 'diagnostic criteria' tell us that while people differ in the range and severity of their symptoms and challenges (the autism spectrum), common features include:



Communication challenges

For example, understanding social cues or using language to express needs.



Repetitive behaviours

For example, intense interest in specific topics or needing to stick to routines and rules.



Sensory sensitivity

For example, hypersensitivity (or hyposensitivity) to light, noise or smell.

Autism strengths

We hear a lot about the difficulties and challenges experienced by autistic people, but autistic people also have strengths and abilities that can be directly related to their autism, including:

- dependable in sticking to schedules and routines
- excellent memory (being able to remember a large number of facts for a long period of time)
- can sustain focus for long periods on an area of interest
- high level of attention to detail
- exceptionally honest, reliable and frank in their opinions
- drive for perfection and order
- generating novel or different solutions to problems
- thinking and learning in a visual way
- adhering strictly to rules
- accepting and less likely to judge others.

Around 1 in 70 people are autistic

Autistic people can and do succeed in a wide range of careers. Here are just a few examples of autistic people who are leading in their chosen fields:

- Dan Akroyd (actor)
- Marty Balin (musician)
- Susan Boyle (singer)
- Hannah Gadsby (comedian)
- Eric Garcia (journalist)
- Daryl Hannah (actor)
- Dan Harmon (producer)
- Heather Kuzmich (model)
- Haley Moss (lawyer)
- Vernon Smith (Nobel Prize winning economist)
- Adam Young (musician).

“Autism is not an illness or disease and cannot be ‘cured’. Many autistic adults consider that being autistic is fundamental to their identity and are upset by research efforts to eliminate autism and treatments which aim to make autistic people behave like non autistic people.”

www.altogetherautism.org.nz/what-is-autism/

For more information, please visit

acu.edu.au/autism